Investigation of Factors Hindering Intentional Vocabulary Learning Among Undergraduate Students

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ABSTRACT:

This paper aims at investigating the influence of some factors that hinder the intentional process of vocabulary learning. The experimental descriptive method is applied via intentional vocabulary tests mediated by an experiment in which the intentional approach to vocabulary teaching is adopted. The sample is composed of one hundred students studying English in fourth year at the faculty of education in University of Kassala. The data available from the intentional type of questions is computationally processed with SPSS program to see the influence of some learning factors on vocabulary learning. The results show that vocabulary achievement is significantly affected by some factors that hinder lexical learning. The study recommends keen awareness of these specific factors to limit their negative influence on intentional vocabulary learning.

Keywords: *influence = effect، lexical = vocabulary، adopt = apply*

مستخلص:

تسعى هذه الورقة إلى تقصي أثر بعض العوامل التي تحد من التعلم المتعمد للمفردات بين الطلاب تحت التخرج. لتحقيق ذلك تم إتباع المنهج التجريبي الوصفي بتطبيق اختبارين قبلي وبعدي توسطتهما تجربة عملية في تدريس المفردات ومن ثم الحصول على بيانات حول طبيعة تحصيل المفردات من عينة اشتملت على مائة طالب يدرسون اللغة الانجليزية بالسنة الرابعة في كلية التربية بجامعة كسلا. تمت معالجة البيانات بالحاسوب لمعرفة أثر بعض العوامل عل التعلم المتعمد للمفردات. أظهرت النتائج أن تحصيل المفردات يتأثر بصورة واضحة بعوامل تحد منه لذلك أوصت الورقة بأخذ تلك العوامل في الاعتبار وذلك لتقليل أثرها السالب على التعلم المتعمد للمفردات.

INTRODUCTION:

The process of teaching vocabulary in foreign languages has witnessed series of developments in relation to progress in language theory and teaching methods. Within this domain appears the adoption of linguistic explanations in the field of intentional vocabulary learning to widen the linguistic competence of learners. The tendency to apply linguistic information in lexical learning is hindered by some defective factors of strategic, linguistic, psychological, pedagogical and socio- cultural natures. This is why this paper intends to draw attention to aspects of intentional vocabulary achievement related to the assigned factors. That is , if learners are well aware of these factors and their influence on vocabulary learning, they will be able to reduce the short comings raised by either insufficient knowledge or inaccurate application.

Aim and scope

This paper sets out to hammer on some factors that obstruct intentional vocabulary learning among undergraduate students. It is limited to the students of English in fourth year at the faculty of education in university of Kassala, Sudan -2015-2016. This work investigates intentional vocabulary learning with respect to some interfering learning factors of various nature without intention to emphasize either of them.

Literature review

The deliberate process of learning vocabulary from intentionally collected data is surrounded

by many influential factors that work associatively to characterise lexical achievement. The most common ones include: learning strategies ,teaching methods , materials and aids that interact with the roles of the native language, inter-language and the target linguistic system. The combined effects of these components is clearly observed when surrounded by certain psychological and socio-cultural aspects that work against accurate mastery of the target lexicon. Views on these issues are elicited to explain the over-lapping nature of such factors that dominate intentional vocabulary learning.

Strategic factors

Strategy consists of the mental or behavioral process of language acquisition and use at the three levels of language production, communication and learning. (Tarone 1980: 419)

Strategies are specific methods of approaching a task or a problem, methods of operation for achieving a particular end or planned designs for controlling and manipulating information. (Brown1990: 87)

The distinction between direct and indirect strategies is that the first consists of strategies directly involved the target language while the second provides support by focusing , planning, controlling anxiety and increasing co-operation. (Oxford, 1996: 15)

Psychological factors

Children propose that under the age of puberty stand an excellent chance of sounding like a native if they continue exposure to language in authentic contexts. (Kenworthy, 1987: 4)

Evidence show the particular motor skills of speech production are best developed at younger age. That is, around the age of ten or twelve the ability to acquire new motor skills decline. Rossner and (Bolitho, 1990: 12)

The learning of the simplest word requires memory since the order of its constituting phonemes needs to be kept undisturbed suggesting the essentiality of memory for rote memorization. (Steinberg, 1993: 106)

Motivation is the combination of effort and desire to achieve learning with the favorable attitudes. A high need to achieve might produce effort as would special pressures or impending exam. (Gardner, 1985: 10)

Linguistic factors

The native language is a highly significant system on which learners will rely to predict the target language system. The rules or patterns of the native language are applied as in language transfer and interference. (Broun, 1994: 206)

One thing which is very clear that second or foreign language learning is not simply a process of putting the target language utterances into first language forms. (Sbada, 1993: 43)

Inter-language effects are likely to be the most salient in facilitating and interfering that may react positively or negatively against the goal of producing perfect target language. (Brown, 1990: 77)

The absence of consistency between sound and shape of most English words as an obvious feature of the writing system discouraging the sense of two forms parallelism. (Gimson, 1980: 264)

English homophones and homographs influence vocabulary learning. The complex relationship between sound and spelling makes the language inexplicable to foreign learners. (Grains and Redman, 1991: 50)

Pedagogical factors

The nature of the data or the manner in which it is presented, explained and practiced may be defective in some way. Besides, the learners has to know certain things before learning something new if data is adequate. (Corder, 1981: 59)

Some errors will be a direct result of misunderstanding caused by faulty teaching or inappropriate teaching methods. One form or pattern may be over emphasized or practiced

that learners produce it in inappropriate contexts. (Little wood, 1984: 32)

Socio-cultural factors:

The relative status of the first and second language, the instrumental value of the target language and the sort of cultural values influence language learning as they are linked to various social organizations. (Stern, 1983: 270)

Language learning itself as a demanding economic investment that the society may have to weigh up the importance of language learning against the other educational needs. (Steinberge, 1993: 24)

Materials and methods

As part of the pre-test the intentional type of questions are given to both subject groups, then in the post-test the intentional test paper is given to intentional learners. The questions are similar for the two groups by being based on words previously taught within the components of a reading comprehension course. 8o words are carefully selected to suit the level of students, specially the intentional group whose members are equipped with linguistic information. The sampling questions include: matching words with their definitions, morphological processes and phonological aspects in three separate questions in addition to identifying word class, word synonyms and antonyms in a typical model. Each main question takes ten marks according to its partial items without penalty for false responses. The aim is to find out if intentional learners can apply their linguistic knowledge in vocabulary achievement with respect to some psychological, strategic, linguistic, pedagogical and socio-cultural factors. Samples of tests are given below:

(1) Match words with their morphological pro

	Process	Word	answe..
1	Borrowing	Aids	
2	Clipping	Piano	
3	Blending	Lab	
4	Compounding	Telex	
5	Acronomy	blackboard	

(2) Match words with their phonological aspects:

	aspect	word	..ver
1	juncture	handbag	
2	assimilation	construct	
3	Stress shift	ice-cream	
4	elision	produce	
5	clusters	often	

Results and discussions

Table (1): results of the intentional pre-test for intentional learners

Definition	synonyms	antonyms	class	meaning	mean
65%	40%	100%	32%	80%	63.4%

Intentional learners show unsystematic level of linguistic knowledge

Table (2): results of the intentional post-test for intentional learners

Definition	Morphological	phonological	autonomy	class	synonymy	mean
61.25%	56.25%	51.25%	65%	50%	63%	57.9%

Intentional learners reflect less level of linguistic knowledge.The given tables show that intentional learners , with a mean of about (63%), seem to know about vocabulary as suggested by the results of the intentional type of questions in the pre-test. At another interval, the same subject group, with a mean of about (58%), appear to achieve less scores in the intentional post-test as a sign of limited linguistic information. This variation can be related to the limited number of simple words in the pre-test shared with the intentional learners in contrast to the bigger number of more advanced words in the post- test specified for intentional learners only.

The results represent variation in performance of the same group under the influence of some learning factors that hinder progress in intentional learning. For example, learners provide similar less scores for word definition

approaching (65%) in the pre-test and (61%) in the post-test. A clearest model appears in the questions requiring matching words with their morphological processes where (56%) of the subjects are able to provide correct responses. The same is true for words matched with their phonological aspects in which (51%) of the participants give positive responses. This is also valid for identifying word class where (50%) of the subjects deal with it accurately. This indicates that learners performance is influenced by learning factors related to the blend of internal psychological factors as well as others of learning strategies, teaching methods and materials together with some linguistic and socio-cultural factors that react against intentional vocabulary learning.

Aspects of Intentional Learning

The intentional approach to vocabulary learning is characterized by its dependence on linguistic information presented to learners as a source of stored knowledge . The extent to which adult foreign learners have good insights into the target linguistic system is considered the core of the learning process . Most of the work is intended to build linguistic competence rather than complete cognitive principles. This due to the partial achievement resulting from the influence of some learning factors that obstruct the process . Therefore, linguistic genres of vocabulary such as the phonological , morphological and semantic aspects as individual components are insufficient . The same is true for the grammatical categories under which words are put , defined functioned and modified to suit the situation of use . A wholisttic system is needed to integrate the roles of linguistic properties for the sake of a comprehensive learning approach of humongous partners .

Definition Strategy

As a widely spread tradition of vocabulary learning, word definition is adopted to supply learners with senses of meaning under various conditions. It is the basic literary or dictionary meaning that is always functioned in conveying the content of lexical items. This may appear in different norms of handling as in providing learners with word definition directly or asking them to pick it from some options in multiple choice items or simply matching words with their given definitions . The later is actually applied in the instrument of data collection to see the extent to which learners can approach word meaning in this way .

To examine progress in achieving lexical learning, the post-test consists of a question requiring matching ten words with their definitions in a table of three columns. The results show that subjects in the intentional group , with a majority of (65%) score positive responses . Similarly, the same subject group with a majority of (61%) provide correct answers in the pre-test , i.e. , with only (4%) as a degree of variation subjects are observed to reflect no significant difference . That is , the ability to recognize word definition is determined by success in recalling the stored linguistic forms . Any interfering factor may occur to disturb memory working required for defining words . As for the possibility of finding word definition from dictionary ,the situation is more complicated as word lists are accompanied by several options from which one choice is relevant . Therefore , words in isolation are threatened by either the wrong choice or the hard purden of merely learning by heart long lists of definitions . The occurrence of such a condition is strongly confined to the complex nature of definitions that often results in limited internalization of meaning . This is because of the short comings raised by unsatisfactory formulated definitions in dictionaries responsible for the sense of inadequacy of meaning . It is the mental dictionary that select the suitable option from the ones given by book

dictionaries . So in the absence of guiding contextual clues , the choice of an option faces the risk of being incomplete or ambiguous . It is the power of the mental lexicon that complete the sense of meaning or remove ambiguity . Therefore , the mere task of matching words with definitions is surrounded by such cases of deficiency in interpreting forward established senses of meaning .

Morphological Aspects

One of the ways to approach intentional vocabulary learning is centered around knowing the internal structure of words as a partial linguistic component denoting the learning process. By so doing, vocabulary grasping turns into searching in the various morphological aspects underlying lexical internalizing , storage and reproduction in a restrict way . The most common areas of morphological inquiring representing intentional learning have to do with morpheme status as characterized by its actual use, relative stability and senses of modifications . These considerations are slightly hammered with regard to some morphological processes , morpheme type or function as well as their cognitive mental agents .

In an attempt to account for the impacts of the learners' morphological competence in achieving lexical learning , a ten items question is applied in the instrument of data collection . The suggested items are intended to measure learners' ability in matching specific lexical items with their relevant basic morphological aspects . Most of the task is directed towards morpheme type and word building processes as chief elements of wide spread in word construction . The data obtained from the post-test reveals that subjects in the intentional group , with a majority of (56%) provide correct responses concerning morphological knowledge of vocabulary . When compared with the marks gained in the whole intentional test (57%) , it appears that a very marginal difference (1%)

occurs . This indicates that instructive morphological learning has a limited role to play in the general frame work of intentional vocabulary learning as seen in learners' scores . The absence of significant difference in intentional vocabulary achievement through morphological entities can be related to the short comings imposed by either insufficient , incomplete or inaccurate application of linguistic knowledge . The idea is that morphemes type or functions appear when put together in certain sequences to convey senses of meaning . The common grounds represented by the sets of principles guiding basic morpheme behavior are no longer permanent . The senses of meaning resulting from longer group of morphemes usually vary with respect to the lexical situation of use . The same is true for the implied senses of meaning inferred when words or their related derivations , inflections and properties express shades of meaning that emerge from regional , social or cultural considerations . Therefore, the morphological structure of words is bound to a homogenous network of overlapping boundaries . The morphological aspects often intermingle with the phonological , semantic and syntactic ones to give birth to vocabulary items under diversity of backgrounds in use . It is context that displays the complexity evoked by the interdependence of the linguistic systems enrolled in vocabulary learning as for as possible .

Grammatical Categories

In search systematic intentional vocabulary learning comes the unique notion of grouping words into classes or categories that share some common grounds with some slight variation . The idea behind such a classification is ease in learning since words of the same or similar category are likely to be simply learnt . The extent to which a lexical item is effectively absorbed is strongly related to the degree of case or difficulty in discovering its typical model of

representation . Agreements on grammatical access to words appear as primary a role for their class identification . Thus , a word may be involved under classes such as nouns , verbs , adverbs and so on . This requires word class memorization so that learners can decide the class of newly learnt words with reference to the given models .

Investigations in learners' ability to identify word class , the instrument of the study devotes two typical questions in both the pre-test. Participants are given ten word sets each contains four lexical items , one of them belongs to a different world class to be underlined . The available data from the post-test reports that half of subjects in the intentional group (50%) succeed in determining the classes of the assigned words . By comparison, the same group , with a minority of (32%) provide positive responses as a sign of low achievement in the pre-test . This informs that in such type of intentional learning it is rather difficult for learners to point out the word of the different class . The average score for the two tests approaching (41%) reflects information of word class as restricted to memorization of facts which is of limited learning value .

In this case ,the source of difficulty is that intentional learning techniques deal with words as isolated existents that rarely meet . They are taught as individual items to be learnt in the same way and tested separately . This artificial tendency is in opposition to the actual nature of words that often collocate in phrase , clauses , sentences and texts . Therefore , when reality of use emphasizes word functioning , word's class is seen from another point of view . A word occasionally changes its class according to its position in a certain context as designed by the function of use . For example , the word 'book' can belong to the class nouns as in 'his book' , but it acts as a verb in 'he books a seat ' . Therefore , it is of significant value to draw attention to the presence of context since it creates positive atmosphere for cognitive learning rather than merely rotting and memorizing fixed categories .

Semantic Features

As a direct means to tackle word meaning , antonym is devised to define words within the contents of the intentional approach to vocabulary learning . It works on lexical areas that are related in terms of opposed conceptual frame works with respect to at least one clear interpretation . What characterizes the features of opposition in the intended senses of meaning is that they lack the dominant nature of spread among the vocabulary system . In other words, antonym is exclusive to a limited domain in vocabulary, namely , adjectives and adverbs rather than other word classes . This is why these two categories appear as more prominent in the task of intentional lexical learning .

To see the extent to which the use of antonyms is effective in lexical learning , the research instrument employs a ten items question to surrey some features of intentional learning through word opposites. In the given test learners are asked to much some words with their antonyms without reference to a specific sense of meaning . The results of the post-test report that subjects in the intentional group , with a majority of (65%) match words with their opposites in a proper way . When back reference is made to the findings the pre-test , the complete members (100%) of the same subject group achieve positive responses . The observed level of variation (35%) stands as an outstanding sign of decrease in learners' performance. This informs that intentional knowledge of antonyms steps back words which is not the case for incidental learning that remains in continuous progress.

The source of decrease in scores by the pre-test sample may be contained to the large number of words introduced during the period of

experiment. That is, in the pre-test subjects' achievement is accomplished with regard to the limited amount of lexis they already learnt . Accordingly , they gain high scores as they learn by heart the exact content of the given words , but when the number of words increases in a vest way , the ability to cover the whole presented lexemes declines . The result is that a lower level of achievement takes place under the influence of opposed factors of lexical enlargement and the parallel limited level of accuracy in learning . This situation may change if the words given in isolation are included in diversity of contextual clues to assist cognitive internalization as an active mediator to the incidental type of learning . The adoption of such a technique is valuable in widening the range of lexical domain to cover areas more than restriction concerning only two word classes .

Phonological Aspects

The sounds of words based on sets of combined phonemes have much to do with the process of instructive vocabulary learning. The structural properties of words in terms syllables ort their small units of vowels , consonants or allophones constitute a rich wealth of phonological aspects of distinct nature . The most outstanding phases of this blend include : elision , assimilation , vowel reduction , consonant clusters , word stress and juncture . The features of word sounding raised by these concepts demand the ability of intentional learners to be aware of the linguistic facts necessary for lexical learning . This is also valid for the sake of producing accurate models of word pronunciation. The mixed character of such phonological aspect is affected by some defective factors they may limit their role in vocabulary learning. At the top of these defects comes the influence of age on applying the linguistic knowledge available.

As adult learners, undergraduate students of vocabulary exercise intentional learning under less helpful conditions. Their touchable impacts are seen when subjects struggle to depict their phonological competence in different ways. In a simple one, subjects are asked to match some words with their underlying phonological aspects. A min question with ten partial items is designed to know about learners' command of some initial facts denoting vocabulary learning. The data extracted from the intentional group reveals limited phonological knowledge in the post-test. More than half (51%) of subjects in the intentional group succeed in matching words with their phonological aspects as a clear tendency to learning. This indicates that learners either receive insufficient information or they latter to reapply it under the influence of some factors hindering the learning process in various ways .

The present case rather low level of achievement can be described with regard to the characteristics of the techniques or the relevant procedures of the intentional learning. It is true that phonological awareness is of crucial importance in lexical learning, but it is likely that the rate of information transference is lower than the one followed in knowledge presentation. That is , learners receive considerable amounts of information , but they lack both the linguistic competence and capacity to perceive the input properly . For example , learners tend to decide the number of syllables in a word or locate the position of word stress but they actually fail in either or both cases . This is due to the scarcity of this feature in the native system to be followed , modified or emphasized as of a different character in the target phonological system .

Synonymy Properties

The relatively precise sense of meaning is usually extracted when a term adequately depicts the exact characters of things and objects in the

real word or their relevant attributed properties used in symbolizing concepts and actions. It is the linguistic competence that is responsible for deriving, inventing and word images to suit the occasion of use. By so doing , word acquire the power of equivalence required for expressing a vast content of intentions , desires , emotions and thoughts through the unique system of word synonymy . The implications of this term may display the nature of inter dependence between literary senses of meaning when reference is made to lexical equivalents as an essential part of the intentional approach to vocabulary .

At this stage, its urgent to estimate the role played by the strategy of word synonymy in promoting lexical learning. For this purpose a multiple choice question is included in the post-test to measure the efficiency of word opposites as a learning device. The actual scores of subjects in the intentional group reveals that (63%) of the participants mange to choose the equal forms of given word . This entails that same sort of progress occurs in learners' performance , but when compared with the incidental group , it is found that (70%) of subjects achieve correct responses . The degree of variation (9%) indicates a better level of achievement since the same words tested intentionally are included in a text to be incidentally retested. The presence of contextual clues makes it possible recognize word synonyms more accurately as the senses of meaning are reasonably clarified.

The sense of distinction noticed in the answers of participants can be explained with respect to the components of the learning atmosphere. On the other hand, finding word synonymous meaning is base on the learners' ability to memorize what is already learnt by heart to provide typical equivalents of the given words. On the other hand, contextual clue are recalled to guide the desired cognitive process responsible for activating the stored lexemes as

mental images representing words. The functioning of such operations makes it easy for learners to think , analyze and elicit evidence to decide answers which is not always the case when complete rotting dominants the task of selection . Therefore, if incidental techniques are incorporated in the learning situation, they are reliable of establishing valid connections to express lexical relationships of various kinds.

Conclusion

It can be said that intentional learning is affected by some interfering factors that hinder vocabulary achievement. Some of them have internal properties related to learners, personality in terms of age, memory motor skills and motivation. Others are of external nature as they have to do with the teaching techniques or materials as well as the learning process and its strategies. In addition, appears the role of the native language , inter language and the target linguistic systems. These issues are no longer isolated from some surrounding socio-cultural components since lexical learning and use are socially characterized and culturally coloured under different conditions.

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